1: Dieterlen--210a E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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a) Tree of the Ndomo, at the center of the uncultivated square (Soroba).

Plate V

b) Stone altar (Banankoroni).

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553 851 [562] Women are not admitted to the men's circle. Gathered near the mother's hut, they know that a name has been given, but do not know what it is. The woman who tied the cord then washes the baby three times in warm, soapy water and, taking water into her mouth, sprinkles the tiny body from neck to lower back three times. She then expresses her good wishes. Carrying the child, she goes to the door of the hut, where the father and family heads are waiting, and asks the name. Then she returns to the women and places the child on the lap of an old woman who blows into the baby's ears three times and then shouts in each ear: "Kuyo! Kuyo! i tua dara, "that is, "Kuyo! Kuyo! [354] your name is ...." The child is then wrapped in the narrow swaddling band which the mother will henceforth use to carry him on her back, and if it is a boy, the baby is rolled three times over the blade of an ax, or if a girl, over an iron implement for picking cotton. While this is going on, everyone is expressing best wishes.

[184] In Kaarta the ceremony is somewhat different. A beef or a sheep killed in front of the mother's hut, and dege [Ed., coarsely ground millet in water] is also prepared. The baby's head is shaved, and the hair is placed on the dege. Each guest [564] puts his right hand on the edge of the gourd and a griot expresses good wishes for the newborn child. Then the guests dance around the dish of dege; the hair is removed from it and given to the mother to keep. [213] Then if the occasion warrants it, the [304] three lines of tattooing peculiar to the Kouloubali are made on the baby's face with a dagger. Finally the griot takes the child, carries it around the crowd, and returns it to the father, who must then make known the chosen name. When the father has pronounced the name, the griot again takes the child and, making a trumpet of his hands, cries out to him three times: "your name is...."

551 In principle, the name (tua) recalls some circumstance surrounding the birth. A posthumous child is usually given his father's name, as though he were the reincarnation of the father, or more commonly, he is called Fa-n-ko, "posthumous" (literally, "the one who came after the fa"). If the baby shows some resemblance to a deceased person, he is named for the person or,

853 A child is nursed for two or even three years, and theoretically, a woman should abstain from sexual intercourse throughout this period. In practice, however, the period of three months mentioned above is the limit of such abstention.

854 Childhood. While he is small, the child remains with his mother, whether she cares for him herself, has him cared for by a slave especially designated for the duty, or turns him over to one of her daughters.

During the nursing period of two or even three years, he is carried astraddle by his mother or some other person entrusted with his care until his legs are strong enough for him to run about the house and its vicinity.

857 At about six or eight years old, he is drawn into the juvenile organization known as n-tomo, and he never fails to join it as soon as he is welcome. Little girls are less free; they are kept at home and put to work at household duties, such as bringing water and wood and watching the fire.

881 Puberty. As we shall see, the n-tomo prepares the child for the soli, a ceremony which marks the most important event of his life, civil puberty. The essential but not the only rite involved in this ceremony is circumcision. In principle, the soli is limited to pubescent boys and this implies that all who go through the ceremony have physically reached puberty. Aside from the fact, however, that this condition is reached at differing ages, the boys who undergo the ceremony differ in age because the soli does not take place every year, owing to the considerable expense involved.

882 When the soli is behind him, a boy is no longer a child; he is not exactly a man either, but rather is a "young master," a kamalen'. Since he is admitted to the brotherhoods, apparently his discretion can be counted on, and he is considered competent to take an oath so he can be called upon to testify in a dispute. Also, if he is enterprising enough to attract attention to himself, he is given trifling missions which inspire him to persevere. Furthermore, since by now he has been made sophisticated by his companions in the n-tomo, his relations with his female companion

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[End Plate 3]

Fig. 5. Bambara with his cheeks slashed in imitation of the tattooing characteristic of the slaves of the Kouloubali, Djenné region.

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Fig. 6. Woman and child, Djenné Region.

2: Monteil--383 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

844 Before delivery of her child, a woman is advised to pound grain. When the labor pains come, the woman retires to her hut with several matrons (men are not allowed access). If the child is poorly presented, the priest is called. He performs outside the hut, simulating the delivery and chanting the formulas that ease labor. To deliver the infant, the woman kneels with her hands thrown behind her, while the midwife supports the small of her back. At birth the infant's shoulders must touch the ground; this is the moment when he receives his spiritual principles. The infant is washed several times and smeared with karite butter.

846 853 854 The mother must not go out during the first eight days after the birth; she must devote herself entirely to the new-born. She massages his head daily in order to give it a more rounded form, and she pinches his nose. She nurses the infant for the first two years, then the weaned child passes directly to the communal calabash. Until the child can walk, the mother carries it astraddle on her back with the aid of a loincloth knotted at her chest. In this manner the infant accompanies the mother everywhere, to work as well as to the dance. 868 It is during these intimate contacts that the mother teaches her child to talk. Later, the little girls stay with their mothers who teach them all the domestic arts, while the boys are educated in outside work. [867] During their childhook they are taught the usages and rules of deportment: a woman knows she must never shake the hand of a man to 201 greet him, and, if he extends his hand, she flings up her arm "as a 576 sign of not being interested." A man will salute his superior by extending his hand palm upwards, and the superior will put his over it; inversely, when a man greets an inferior he extends his hand with the palm down, while for an equal his hand will be perpendicular to the ground. If a man must ask someone's pardon, he puts his hands behind his back to simulate the tail of an animal (for he has acted like an animal). Crossing the hands in front of or upon the head is a sign of sadness. To mark his submission to a king, a man puts his right elbow to the ground. To pray to God, the two hands are extended with the palms turned [89] outward. A woman learns that it is im- 576 pudent to question her husband during the day, and when she speaks 593 of him, she says koke, that is, big brother, for she cannot pronounce 833 his name or in any way recall the bonds which exist between them. It is only during the two consecutive nights that she couples with him

822 in the rites. "Red is the color of the middle regions of the world. It characterizes dry heat; it is the color of anger and of justice, that of the king, center of the kingdom." Black or indigo (2) is

2. Zahan, Les couleurs chez les Bambara du Soudan francais [Colors Among the Bambara of the French Sudan], Notes Africaines, 1951.

identified with the North and the [98] rainy season. It evokes impurity, obscurity. It denotes sadness and the end of labor. The South accords with the ancestors and the color white which represents light and purity; it is the color of Faro. The whole system 286 of bands woven from different colored threads according to various 822 designs translates the different conditions of the wearer, for each band has its own history, its definite use, and its cosmogonic correspondences. The study of this was begun by G. Dieterlen in Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion] and is being 291 pursued at the present time. Today the form of clothing varies according to the age and sex of the wearer. Young children are nude, with the loins girt with a cotton string or with a belt of blue beads or cowry shells. Sometimes, two small copper bells attract the protection of Faro by their sound. Up until their marriage, the young girls wear a loincloth passed between their legs and held in place by eight bead belts. When they are married, women wear the loincloth open, attached at the waist, and a cotton handkerchief covers [854] their hair. When a child is born, another cloth knotted at the chest holds the infant astraddle on the mother's back. A chief's wife [554] wore a piece of material made of seven bands which she threw over her shoulder. Very young boys wear short drawers whose form varies with the age classes. Later they are dressed in a short tunic with a neck opening cut out and fitted sleeves, and in ample short breeches [801] formed of three bands (the masculine number), passing between the legs and three bands on each side covering the thighs. The waist is also encircled by four times three bands, numbers of femininity and of masculinity. Over their clothes, men and women wear a large cloak with an opening cut out in the middle for the head and whose ends are sown together, leaving large openings on each side. These cloaks have a large pocket in front and are embroidered with symbolic

844 851 In the end comes a word of encouragement from the midwives and the father: "A gnéna, that is good." The woman who tied /sic/ the umbilical cord runs to tell the head of the village, the dougoutigi, or /169/ gnéna-n-sonnaba, and the sotigi (if the civil and religious powers do not rest in one and the same head), and the members of his council, the gouatigi (or heads of families), that the village has one more inhabitant. To each and every one she tells the news of the newborn in a flood of words, she declares her fears or her hopes, and everyone greets her, thanks her, and makes her one of those wishes that go straight to the heart. She deserves these praises and can desire them, for she has done her duty. Besides, these are her only fees. A Bambara midwife does not get paid; she receives a present or is given a tip, so let us leave her her glory and not call her mercenary.

The child receives a name; his head is shaved. -- Two or 846 three days after her delivery before she has recovered, a Bambara woman begins to tend to her household duties. But she does not leave her hut at all; she sits on a mat, spins cotton, and smiles at her child or fondles it in her arms. And why does she not get a breath of air at least in her court? Could it be false modesty on her part? Not at all; she is proud to be a mother, but can she leave her darling for even a moment? It has no swaddling clothes or cradle; it can only cry, demand the breast, struggle and get into a position that is harmful to his frail body, and to go outdoors and visit the men friends who seem to ignore her since she became a mother (1),

> 1. Men do not enter the hut of a woman in confinement until after the tonsure and naming of the infant. The husband himself does not go in except when necessary.

she would have to leave it there alone, all by itself. Until the [854] infant's navel dries, she cannot put the infant astride on her back, which is the only way she knows to carry him, and if she were to go out without her child, her milk would dry up and become full of substances harmful to the nursing infant.